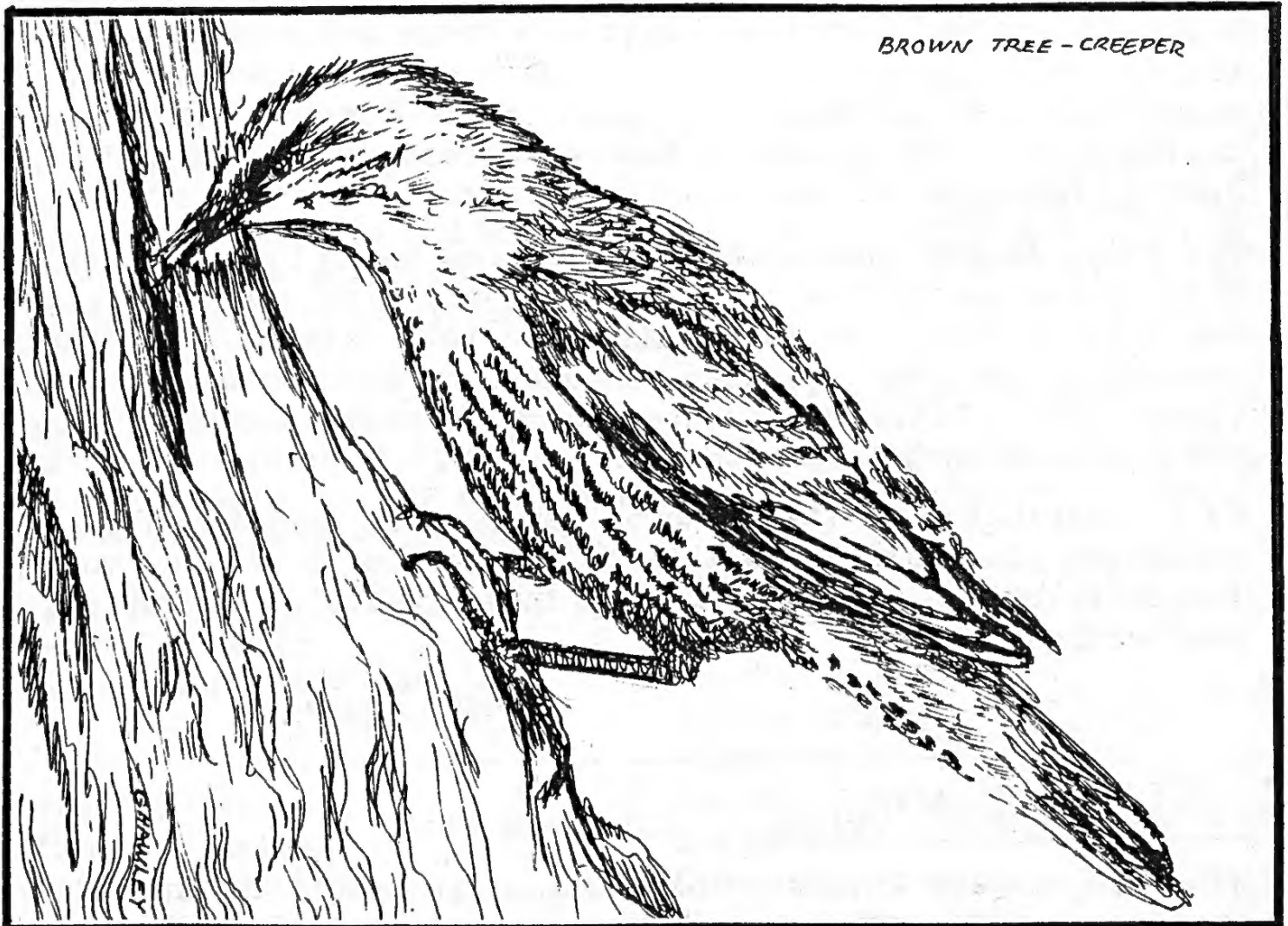


Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

JUNE, 1982.

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting 4th.June - "Birds and Bird calls".
Speaker - Dr.F.Harrap.
- Meeting 2nd.July - "Potaroo". Speaker - Mr.J.Seebeck.
- Excursion 6th.June - Sunday - Full Day - Mt.Erip.
Leaders Dr.F.Harrap, Mr.P.Fry.
- Excursion 4th.July - Sunday - Full Day - Linton.Working Bee.
Leaders - Mr.G.Clarke, Mr.R.Thomas.



BROWN TREE - CREEPER

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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

THE ATLAS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

Guest speaker at the May meeting was Mr. T. Garnett, a former Secretary of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, who spoke to us about the R.A.O.U.'s Bird scheme. Some 3000 observers from all over Australia contributed record sheets showing birds seen in specific areas; the country was divided into about 800 blocks, of which each was surveyed during the 5-year period of the Field Atlas, from 1977-81. Details of earlier sightings have also been collected, and comprise the Historical Atlas. The whole project, undertaken mainly by amateur bird-watchers, has been an outstanding success.

Mr. Garnett quizzed us about Australia's six most widespread birds, and told us that the Atlas has indicated these to be, in order, the Willie Wagtail, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Falcon, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Pipit and Wedge-tailed Eagle. The six most widespread breeding records were, in order, Magpie, Magpie Lark, Willie Wagtail, Galah, Fairy Martin, and Wedge-tailed Eagle. There were 6 authentic recordings of Night Parrot, but none of the Paradise Parrot.

The Atlas itself (the actual book) is now being prepared, and will be available late next year. Every bird will be covered and illustrated, with maps and explanatory details. Unlikely or unusual reports have been screened, by sending questionnaire forms - "URRFs" (Unusual Record Report Forms), to ensure that the publication is accurate.

As a contributor to this scheme, I am eagerly awaiting the completed publication and will be interested to see how much the distribution maps differ from those available in current publications.

Roger Thomas.

BRISBANE RANGES OUTING. 2nd. March 1982.

Nineteen members attended this outing, in beautiful autumn weather. After meeting at Meredith, and partaking of morning tea, we journeyed first to Track 21. Here there were a number of plants in flower, including heath, hibertia, golden grevillea, and red and cream corea. Some of the orchids seen were Pterostylis parviflora, Autumn greenhood (P. revoluta), Midge 2. orchid (Prasophyllum despectans), Gnat orchid (Acianthus

exertus), and Parson's bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*).

A particularly large and healthy looking koala gazed down at us, many birds were seen, the prize of the morning being the Powerful Owl. We had passed within 20m of this magnificent creature without seeing it until we obtained the assistance of Harry Dunn, a member of the Geelong F.N.C. who lives nearby. Harry, who frequently walks in the area, knew just where to look.

Leaving Track 21 we headed for Laver Dam for lunch, then headed north on the Switch-back Track, to the Little River picnic area, and on to the slate quarries. The quarry face with beautifully coloured slate standing almost vertical was a magnificent sight.



High up on the quarry face we saw the spot where last year a pair of peregrine falcons successfully reared a chick. In this area were many plants including *Bossiaea obcordata*, one of the rare plants of the Ranges.

The bird list for the day was:

Red-wattle bird

Honeyeater -white-eared.

-yellow-faced.

-New Holland.

Powerful Owl.

Crimson rosella.

Thornbill -brown

-striated.

-buff-tailed.

Scarlet robin.

Yellow robin,

Flame robin.

Eastern shrike-tit.

Eastern spinebill.

Grey currawong.

Magpie lark.

Jacky Winter.

White-throated tree-creeper.

Lyndsay Fink.

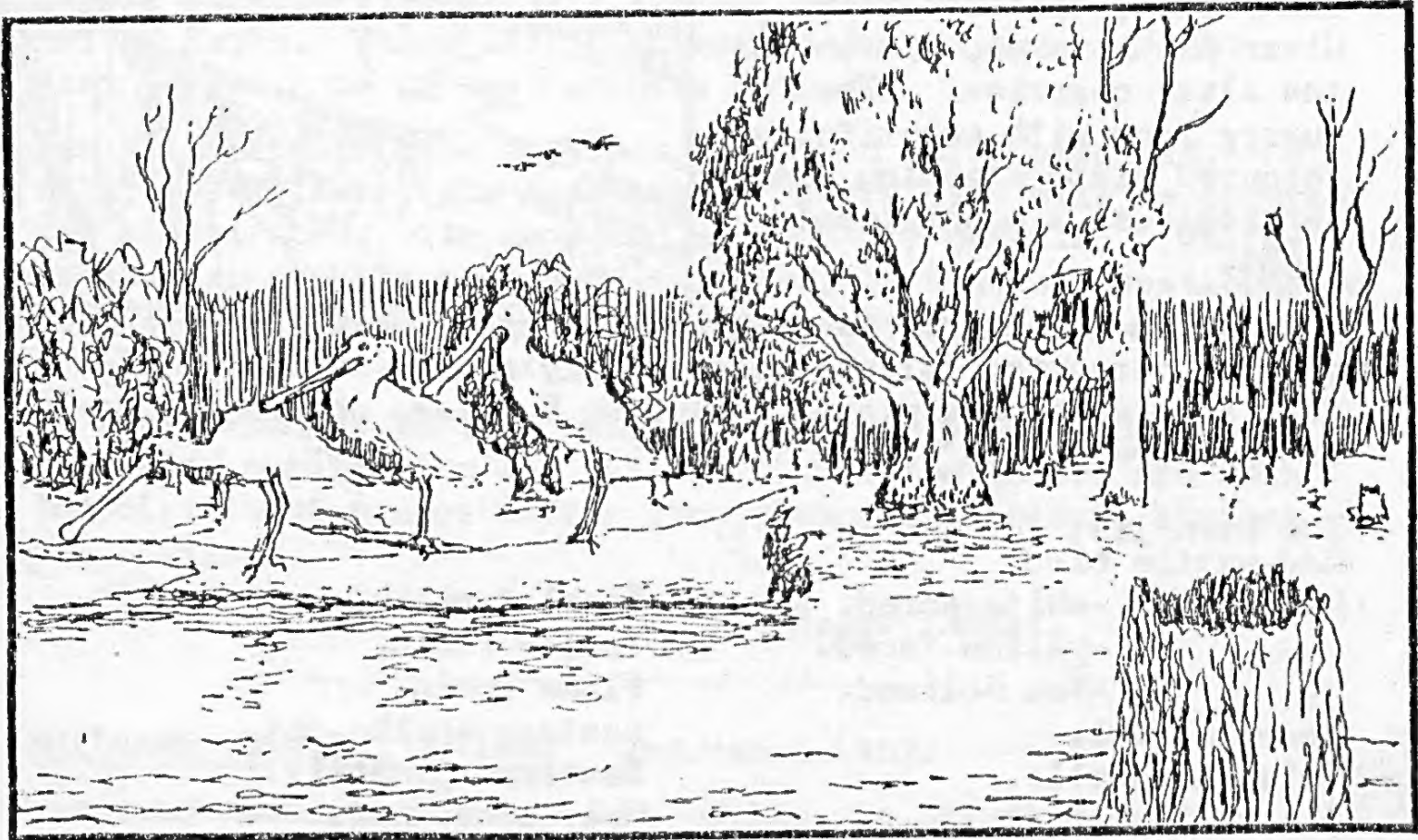
Our thanks to Mrs. Fink for a most enjoyable morning tea, and to Lyndsay for a rewarding outing in the ranges which he knows so well - Editor.

CLUNES SWAMPS.

At a recent meeting of representatives of the Maryborough, Creswick, and Ballarat Field Naturalists' Clubs, and Mr. Don White of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department, items concerning management of the swamps were discussed.

It was decided that sections of land surrounding Middle Swamp be ploughed to encourage re-generation, and this will be compared with unploughed sections.

Indigenous species will be planted in Spring, with the exception of Red Gums which seem to be already regenerated successfully.



Excursion to Merrin Merrin

Two blocks have been purchased at Middle Swamp. It is interesting to note that Middle Swamp contains water at present, but that Merrin Merrin is dry.

It is intended to build up a comprehensive slide collection for comparison in later years, and the committee would appreciate lists of bird sightings and breeding, so that an on-going record can be kept.

Helen Burgess.

B.O.C. Bird Skin Collections - from "The Bird Observer", Apr. 1982.

The Bird Observers' Club has been granted a permit to preserve the skins of birds that are found dead from accidental deaths such as road kills, window and power-line casualties, beach washed victims, etc..

If it is not possible to hand over a freshly killed bird immediately, the B.O.C. suggests these guidelines for the preservation and mailing of frozen birds:

1. Comb or preen the feathers into place as carefully as possible (to prevent "kinks" during refrigeration).
2. Wrap in three or four layers of newspaper.
3. Place the wrapped specimen in three or four plastic bags, one inside the other, each sealed with a rubber band.
4. Write out and attach a small card stating the species, the date and place found, cause of death (if known), colour of the soft parts (eyes, beak, legs), the donor's name, address and telephone number.
5. Deep-freeze in a freezer (or the freezer section of a refrigerator) for at least 24 hours for a small bird, 48 hours for a large bird.
6. Advise B.O.C. Headquarters of the existence of the specimen so that the taxidermist can be made aware of its imminent arrival.
7. Mail the frozen specimen in a box (or cardboard cylinder for a small bird) to B.O.C. Headquarters or, by prior arrangement, direct to the taxidermist. Ensure that the package is mailed EARLY in the week, either Monday or Tuesday, to prevent it being held by the postal authorities over a weekend.
8. Prior to donation of very rare birds to Fisheries and Wildlife or National Museum of Victoria, any species can be accepted by the B.O.C. The B.O.C. permit excludes certain species which are rare in Victoria.
9. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. if the species is unusual or outside its normal range), it is possible to prepare a reasonable skin from a disadvantaged start.

Small marsupials



Kangaroos have been studied in some detail, but we still have a great deal to learn about our small marsupials, many of which have come off second-best in the clash with European man. The marsupials of the inland plains have suffered most: of 21 species present 150 years ago, nine have become extinct and all but four are rare. Three are kangaroos and the other is a marsupial mouse. The Australian people are guardians of a large proportion, and an especially wide variety, of the world's remaining marsupials. How well equipped are we to conserve those that survived Aboriginal hunting and burning, and then the highly unsettling arrival of European man? The answer is, not at all well, but matters are slowly improving.

In ecology a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. If you know, for example, no more about the greater glider than that it lives among trees, you may suppose you can save it in commercial forests by simply collecting animals in the zone to be felled and releasing them elsewhere.

Biologists from the Australian National University in Canberra put this notion to test. In a 6-year study of the glider

they found that individuals remain in their home range even after trees have been felled. Rather than attempt to wring an existence from nearby unfelled forest, the gliders stay at home and starve. Most die within a week.

Monash University workers have also found subtle interactions between some marsupial species, as yet not fully understood. For instance, where the ranges of two species of *Antechinus* (marsupial mice) overlap, their breeding seasons shift apart. Thus *A.stuartii* on its own may breed at about the same time as *A.swainsonii*, but where they coincide *stuartii* delays its breeding by about a month, by which time the *swainsonii* males have died - victims of both the breakdown of their immune systems and severe stress induced by their aggressiveness during the mating season.

Ecos: No.26,Nov.1980.

SUNDEW PUZZLES.

Why is it, I have wondered for a few years, that leaves of nearby scented sundew plants vary so much in colour? It seems unlikely that season, sunlight, or soil are the causes, because of the proximity of different coloured plants. To see if they change colour over the winter, I have marked a few patches and will watch them as the season progresses. One group is a bright yellow-green, while another could be described as a deep claret red.

Another puzzle, considering that these interesting plants are so dependent on insects, is their period of activity - they flourish in the cooler months, then die down in mid spring, just as the insect life is multiplying. I don't expect to ever solve the latter puzzle, but hope one day to discover why the leaf colour varies as it does.

Roger Thomas.

Project 48: "TRANSLOCATION OF KOALAS TO NEW HABITATS"

Translocation of koalas into new habitat will be the principal means of managing populations of this animal in the foreseeable future. Project 48 aims to study how this can be done more successfully than in the past as many translocations have failed. Either the koalas have dispersed from the release site or lost condition and died.

One suggested cause of this failure is that the animals have not become attached to their new site. Another is that individual koalas can tolerate only a limited range of eucalypt food.

Consequently, this study will investigate the influence the social organisation and previous diet on the success of translocations.

Koalas occur today in a fraction of their earlier numbers in forest which is being progressively fragmented. Translocation of part of the population is essential to prevent over-browsing in these "islands" of forest.

The results of Project 48 could also have considerable bearing on the future success of translocating other animals.

Work on this three-year study cannot commence until funds of \$71,847 are raised.

Announcing increased subscriptions of \$15 per annum from 1st. July 1982, Adrian Stark, Director of W.W.F.Australia said "Quite simply, if we are to satisfactorily fulfil our task of helping to protect Australia's endangered wildlife, we need more money.

8. We have 18 projects awaiting funding.



Koalas shown in defoliated areas on French Island, Victoria, main area from which the animal will be translocated.
Photo: Ron Waters.